

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

***San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Karen P. Hewitt***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **MARIJUANA GROWER SENTENCED TO 60 MONTHS IN CUSTODY AND ORDERED TO FORFEIT HIS THREE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

#### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - August 3, 2007

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Damien Anthony Andrews was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in San Diego by United States District Judge Dana M. Sabraw to serve 60 months in custody and a five-year term of supervised released, based upon his May 18, 2007 guilty plea to conspiracy to manufacture marijuana plants, and to money laundering based on wire fraud.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri Walker Hobson, who prosecuted the case, Andrews was arrested following the execution of a federal search warrant at his log cabin located in Santa Ysabel on March 28, 2007. Court documents indicate that the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”), the San Diego Narcotic Task Force (“NTF”), and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation (“IRS”) found a sophisticated, clandestine indoor marijuana cultivation operation consisting of 454 marijuana plants at that location. The grow site was underground, accessible by a concealed closet elevator in a garage

structure on the parcel. From the elevator shaft, there was a 4-foot wide, 65-foot tunnel that led to rooms fitted with irrigation, lighting, electrical and ventilation systems. Andrews owns the 39-acre parcel, which had a sophisticated surveillance system using multiple cameras and monitors.

As part of a plea agreement, Andrews admitted to conspiring with others to grow marijuana in the underground rooms at his Santa Ysabel property. In connection with the money laundering counts, Andrews admitted that he knowingly and intentionally submitted materially false information to lenders about the true source of his income, the amount of his income, and his employment history. Andrews also admitted that he obtained fraudulent loans in the amount of \$1,120,000.00 from one company and \$409,613.26 from another company to purchase residences on Compass Road in Oceanside and Neptune Avenue in Encinitas.

In connection with his guilty plea, Andrews further agreed to forfeit three residential properties, including the 39.7 acre parcel containing the log cabin in Santa Ysabel, California, where the underground marijuana grow was found, the residence on Compass Road, Oceanside, California, and the beach residence on Neptune Avenue in Encinitas. The Encinitas property is Andrews' primary residence; it was purchased by Andrews for \$1.4 million in November 2006. The Santa Ysabel property is valued at \$450,000.

United States Attorney Hewitt said, "The underground marijuana growing operation in this case demonstrates the lengths to which drug traffickers will go to make their illicit profit. The sixty-month sentence to be served by Mr. Andrews and forfeiture of his properties demonstrate our unwavering commitment to punish drug traffickers and to take the profit out of their criminal conduct."

DEA Acting Special Agent in Charge Alan Poleszak said, "Mr. Andrews' guilty plea underscores the futility of attempting to conceal drug trafficking activities while simultaneously living a lifestyle fueled by these efforts. Elevators and tunnels may lead to underground grow rooms but they may also lead to federal prison."

"The joint investigative efforts of the San Diego law enforcement community have made a significant impact on clandestine marijuana grow operations in this region," said Ronald Krajewski, Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge, San Diego Office of IRS-Criminal Investigation. "The financial expertise of

IRS special agents contributes to the dismantling of drug trafficking organizations by unraveling the money laundering methods utilized by drug dealers including the purchase of expensive property and luxury assets.”

United States Attorney Hewitt praised the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) for the coordinated team effort in this case. Several local, state and federal law enforcement agencies assisted in this OCDETF investigation, including DEA, San Diego Narcotic Task Force, IRS, and the United States Marshal’s Service. The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country’s battle against major drug trafficking.

Andrews, a Canadian citizen, will be subject to deportation after he serves his custodial sentence.

**DEFENDANT**

**Case Number: 07cr1014-S**

Damien Anthony Andrews

Civil Complaints for Forfeitures of Properties: 07cv0567, 07cv0569

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Conspiracy to Manufacture Marijuana Plants (100 plants or more)  
Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846

Money Laundering based on Wire Fraud  
Title 18, United States Code, Section 1957

Criminal Forfeiture (Conspiracy to Manufacture Marijuana)  
39.2 Acres in Santa Ysabel, California

Criminal Forfeiture (Money Laundering)  
Property on Compass Street, Oceanside, California  
Property on Neptune Avenue, Encinitas, California

**PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

Drug Enforcement Administration  
San Diego Narcotics Task Force  
Internal Revenue Service  
United States Marshals Service